



Comprehensive Milestones of Child Development

Social and Emotional Development

Introduction

By nature, human beings are social creatures. From birth, healthy children form strong attachments with significant adults, and later, with their peers through social interaction. These relationships are influenced by temperament, the set of in-born personality traits that organize the child's approach to the world, as well as by the culture and the environment in which the child lives. Children depend upon these social interactions to build meaning about their world.

Social development and emotional development are closely interrelated; both encompass a child's ability and desire to interact effectively with adults and other children. Children acquire social and emotional skills in a relatively predictable manner. For example, children establish warm and responsive interactions and formative relationships with adults before they develop self-concept and self-control. Secure relationships with nurturing adults typically precede the development of relationships with peers and groups. The *essential* social and emotional needs of children remain the same throughout the early childhood years and can be supported with secure relationships from birth to kindergarten.

Social Development

Young children's ability to form and sustain social **relationships with others** is at the heart of their social development. Children's social relationships with adults include the ability to trust and interact easily with them, as well as their ability to recognize adult roles. Children look to adults for guidance, cues, and information on how to think, feel, and act. Later, children's relationships with their peers influence how they view themselves and the world. Positive social relationships indicate a child's ability to form and to maintain relationships, to negotiate interactions in a positive manner, and to develop pro-social behaviors, such as empathy, respect, and sensitivity.

Emotional Development

Children's ability to trust and form bonding relationships is key to their emotional development. Children's abilities to recognize and express their own feelings, and to understand and respond to the emotions of others, provide them with important emotional skills. Central to the understanding of emotional development is **self-concept**, or children's overall perception of self, including traits, habits, abilities, motives, and social roles, which includes their perceived self-esteem. Children need support to develop **self-control**, understand emotions, and to manage or regulate them in both personal and social contexts.

The **Social and Emotional Development** domain is organized into the following strands and related concepts:

Strand 1: Relationships with Others: Social relationships have their beginning in children's developing awareness of others. Social skills that involve understanding that others have feelings take time to grow. As this happens over time, children seek out peers in their play.

Strand 2: Learning about Self (Self-Perceptions): Sense of self includes knowledge and beliefs about one's own characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses, judgments and feelings about one's value and worth, and beliefs about one's competence in specific areas. As children establish a sense of self, they are beginning to answer the questions, Who am I?, Am I worthwhile?, and What can I do?

Strand 3: Expression of Feelings and Self-Regulation: Emotional development includes understanding and managing or regulating emotions in both personal and social contexts. Children's abilities to understand their emotions, and to effectively and appropriately express themselves are important aspects of emotional well-being and lay an effective foundation for social relationships across the life-span.



Social and Emotional Development Strand 1: Relationships With Others

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
A1. Depend on others to provide for wants and needs.	Cry, make sounds, or use body movements to signal adult for assistance, attention, or other needs.	<p>Responding consistently and promptly to child's needs for comfort and reassurance (e.g., hold, change child's position, feed, change diaper, add or remove blanket, soothe by patting or crooning, etc.).</p> <p>Using verbal and nonverbal communications in response to infant's request (e.g., use a hand gesture consistently as a signal for drinking while also saying the word).</p>
A2. Form and maintain secure relationships with others.	<p>Listen attentively, observe facial expressions, and respond by cooing, smiling, crying, and/or reaching out to familiar adults.</p> <p>Demonstrate a strong preference for familiar adults.</p>	<p>Holding, cuddling, hugging, smiling and maintaining eye contact while providing care, playing, and interacting verbally (e.g., elongated vowels, higher pitch, babbling back and forth with child).</p> <p>Providing consistent familiar adults to respond to the child's needs.</p> <p>Helping child manage feelings of distress, offering verbal and nonverbal comfort; verbalize child's emotions.</p>
A3. Respond to the environment in the presence of adult.	<p>Respond to sound when songs are sung by adult.</p> <p>Reach for and grasp objects.</p>	<p>Talking with and singing to child using rhyme, rhythm, and repetition frequently, especially during feeding and diaper changes.</p> <p>Providing child with a variety of safe, stimulating, and interesting environments and materials to explore (e.g., soft rattle sets that stimulate children with sights, sounds, and reflections).</p>
A4. Develop early social problem-solving.	<p>Cry, rock back and forth, and lift arms to signal for help.</p> <p>Gain the attention of others through vocalizations, reaching out, and smiling.</p>	<p>Responding promptly to child's requests for assistance.</p> <p>Positioning child to view the activities of others (i.e., on-looker play) and to interact with them.</p>

Social and Emotional Development Strand 1: Relationships With Others

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
A5. Laugh in social game of imitation with peers.	Imitate a friend's active movement (e.g., simple games of chase in which they take turns running (toddler-style) across the room and repeating an event such as ringing a bell.)	Structuring the environment to provide a safe place for active movement. Observing and redirecting the game if it appears to be getting overly stimulating.
A6. Demonstrate increasing ability to form and maintain secure relationships with others.	Engage in interactive games with adult. Show a strong preference for adults through behaviors such as glancing back and seeking reassurance and approval from them in times of exploration.	Singing simple songs with facial and hand gestures (e.g., "The Itsy Bitsy Spider") and playing "Peek-a-boo". Providing an environment that is supportive and consistent (e.g., talking to children about what will happen next).
A7. Demonstrate increasing social problem-solving.	Seek comfort from adults when hurt, frightened, or if another child grabs toy away. Give playful signals to get adult to repeat enjoyable action or hand a toy to adult to get help in activating it.	Supporting child to try new things by introducing them gradually, gently, and playfully. Responding to child's request for playful response, getting an action to repeat at child's request, and retrieving items to which child points.
A8. Develop friendships with one or more peers.	Play peacefully alongside a peer as long as there are enough toys to go around, but be unable to share own toys. Engage in brief playful exchanges with peers, perhaps imitating each other's actions, and show enthusiasm about the company of other children.	Labeling toys to indicate to whom they "belong" and modeling ways to take turns or use other available toys. Providing opportunities for sharing things that are plentiful and easy to share (e.g., a few pieces of snack) and taking turns performing an action such as rolling a ball when playing with child. Providing opportunities for child to play with other children from own and other cultural backgrounds regularly.

Social and Emotional Development Strand 1: Relationships With Others

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
A9. Successfully enter and engage in group pretend play.	Say, "I can be the person who collects the tickets." Say, "Let's pretend we're building a zoo for all the animals."	Helping children enter a group by suggesting a role that will help extend the group's pretend story. Providing props for pretend play and suggest new themes when needed.
A10. Show empathy and caring for others.	Pretend to soothe a crying baby doll in the house/dramatic play area. Be concerned when a friend is hurt.	Helping child use words to describe actions and feelings. Demonstrating caring for others when they are sick, hurt, or in need of special assistance (e.g., offering a helpful pat or helping adult apply a soothing cloth).
A11. Cooperate with others.	Take turns in games so long as there is not a long wait. Sustain interactions by cooperating, helping, sharing, and suggesting new ideas for play. Say, "OK, you can have the green car. I'll take the blue one."	Creating opportunities for successful group interactions by providing adequate supplies, and expectations for working together. Helping child cooperate by staging a common goal such as making music together or getting something done so they can enjoy the results together (e.g., all work together to make a big hole in sand so they can fill it with water).
A12. Demonstrate increased ability to resolve conflicts.	Use words suggested by an adult to express anger, such as, "I don't like it when you push me," or "That makes me mad!" Ask a child to return a toy she has grabbed, and turn to an adult for help if the child refuses.	Providing adequate supplies/materials, but limit the amount just slightly so that some sharing and turn-taking is encouraged. Encouraging child to problem-solve independently when conflicts are encountered.
A13. Interact easily with one or more children and adults.	Separate willingly from adults to play with friends, most of the time. Engage in turn taking exchanges and conversation with adults and peers.	Acknowledging positively the child's attempts to resolve conflicts. Modeling and explaining why it is important to be respectful in a variety of settings and contexts. Providing opportunities for child to play in small groups.

Social and Emotional Development Strand 2: Learning About Self (Self-Perceptions)

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
B1. Explore own body and begin to examine body parts of others.	Clasp hands together and explore own fingers and toes. Touch others' hair, ears, etc.	Singing songs and finger plays with actions that include body parts and talking with child, naming body parts and actions, during routines such as diapering. Playing imitation games such as sticking out tongue, widening eyes, furrowing brows or opening and closing hands.
B2. Gain an emerging sense of self as separate from but also connected to others.	Interact with self in a mirror as if it were another person. Respond to sound of own name.	Providing unbreakable mirrors for child to look at self. Saying child's name often, describing actions and feelings.
B3. Feel worthwhile and accepted.	Anticipate positive acceptance by peers and adults.	Appreciating child with warm, welcoming greetings and departures.
B4. Demonstrate an emerging sense of competence and confidence in growing abilities.	Repeat actions on toys that get results (e.g., activating a toy, searching for toys in hiding game) Venture farther away from routine space.	Providing toys that encourage exploration (e.g., nesting items, boxes) within and just beyond reach. Providing a safe environment for active exploration.
B5. Smile or laugh at mastery of motor skills, sound play, clowning, or games of tickling.	Laugh and engage in repetitive imitation with trusted adults (e.g., enjoy peek-a-boo, react to funny faces or respond positively to a gentle tickling game so long as it is not overly surprising or frightening.)	Playing games of imitation (words and gestures), tickling, or peek-a-boo with baby, repeating only when as it leads to laughter or joy. Imitating baby's vocalizations or gestures in a playful back-and-forth turn-taking game so long as baby enjoys it, avoiding overly intense or surprising activity.
B6. Understand self in terms of unique characteristics, preferences, and abilities.	Turn head and push the food away when she is not hungry or does not like item. Squeal in excitement when hearing a favorite song, repeating, "Again! Again!"	Expecting child to protest as he expresses individuality. Demonstrating, explaining, and engaging child in discussing what he likes and does not like about experiences.

Social and Emotional Development Strand 2: Learning About Self (Self-Perceptions)

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
B7. Begin to recognize family members' roles and names.	<p>Purposefully seek out specific adults who are able to meet specific needs.</p> <p>Point to family members and begin to understand their relationship to one another (e.g., "Where's sister?").</p>	<p>Using the child's name and the names and roles of people in her life.</p> <p>Providing props to help child imitate family members (e.g., mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, cousin).</p>
B8. Develop independence.	<p>Learn to say "No, don't do that. It hurts me."</p> <p>Ask adult for assistance getting a turn.</p> <p>Say, "It's mine!" and turn to adult for assistance.</p>	<p>Encouraging child to express displeasure in situations with other children independently, but monitoring to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>Responding to requests for assistance, empowering child to achieve goals while balancing rights of other children.</p>
B9. Show increasing ability to distinguish between self and others.	<p>Recognize items that belong to oneself by saying, "mine".</p> <p>Attempt to draw self, but drawing might be a circle to represent head and will lack detail.</p> <p>Identify self and use own name when asked (e.g., "I am a girl." "My name is Christina.").</p>	<p>Pointing out and labeling items that belong to the child.</p> <p>Displaying photos of child and his family at child's eye level.</p> <p>Assisting child in creating an <i>All About Me</i> book with pictures and captions.</p> <p>Using child's name while commenting on activities throughout the day (e.g., "Miguel is wearing blue shoes today," or "Ann is pulling the truck.").</p>
B10. Adjust comfortably to new surroundings.	<p>Adjust behavior to different settings (e.g., home, playground).</p>	<p>Introducing new places, people, and activities gradually and providing some familiar items in new surroundings.</p> <p>Communicating with families or other appropriate adults to ensure smooth transitions from home to school or from one classroom to another.</p>
B11. Demonstrate confidence and pride in accomplishments.	<p>Request that artwork be displayed.</p> <p>Ask adults to watch her perform a task.</p>	<p>Displaying children's work in aesthetic ways at child's eye level.</p> <p>Acknowledging and showing appreciation for child's accomplishments.</p>

Social and Emotional Development Strand 2: Learning About Self (Self-Perceptions)

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
B12. Continue to perceive self as worthwhile and accepted.	<p>Draw picture of self that reflects sense of self.</p> <p>Exhibit body posture, gait and facial expressions that reflect pride and positive feelings about self.</p>	<p>Avoiding comparing children and labeling some as “better” or “less competent” than others.</p> <p>Observing for signs of low self-worth (e.g., holds head down, slumps in defeat.)</p> <p>Commenting on child’s status as member of group and as being “special” to oneself.</p>
B13. Begin to understand consequences of actions, especially as choices affect others.	<p>Refrain from doing something that will make another child cry.</p> <p>Engage in play-acting with adults to observe responses.</p>	<p>Acknowledging child’s behavior when waits turn or helps another person feel better.</p> <p>Play-acting or dramatizing responses to actions, e.g. pretend to fall backward if pushed, pretend to cry or be hurt after a “pretend” act of pinching or hitting.</p>
B14. Demonstrate increased awareness of own abilities, characteristics, feelings, and preferences.	<p>Describe self using physical and behavioral characteristics (e.g., “I am tall and I can jump high.”).</p> <p>Describe own interests, skills, and abilities in certain areas (e.g., “I like to paint.”).</p>	<p>Encouraging discussions of physical characteristics, and individual preferences and abilities.</p> <p>Engaging child in conversations about his preferences and abilities by asking who, what, where, when, why questions (e.g., “What do you like to do?” and “Where do you like to go best?”).</p>
B15. See self as able to have power and make responsible choices.	<p>Say, “I’m not going to eat my applesauce now. I’m going to save it for snack time.”</p>	<p>Expanding the range of choices so long as child makes choices that are within the established guidelines of safety and responsible behavior toward property and people.</p> <p>Saying, “Now that you have shown me you can remember to _____, you have the privilege of choosing when you will _____.”</p>
B16. Laugh at own mistakes or accidents so long as there is no serious consequence.	<p>Laugh after realizing that their shoes are on the wrong feet.</p> <p>Laugh after accidentally calling teacher, “Mommy.”</p>	<p>Modeling how to recognize humor in own mistakes.</p> <p>Avoiding ridicule and helping child develop positive reactions to mistakes (e.g. “Oh, Oh. I think my eyes played a trick on me.”)</p> <p>Refraining from making fun of child’s mistake. Purposefully making occasional mistakes so as to model how to laugh at own mishaps.</p>

Social and Emotional Development Strand 3: Expression of Feelings and Self-Regulation

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
C1. Develop early emotional and behavioral regulation.	<p>Cry when she is hungry, uncomfortable, or unhappy.</p> <p>Stop crying (typically) when he is cuddled and held by adult.</p>	<p>Providing a regular routine for eating, sleeping, and activities that may be unique to each child.</p> <p>Responding to children readily, in soothing tones, and with physical comforting.</p>
C2. Increase emotional and behavioral regulation.	<p>Use a comfort object, such as a blanket or stuffed toy to reduce arousal or distress when feeling stressed or upset.</p> <p>Look toward adults for help when becoming upset.</p> <p>Begin to recognize boundaries while not yet having the capacity to stop impulses, such as looking back to the adult while approaching a forbidden object and saying “no-no.”</p>	<p>Helping child learn to calm self (e.g., model calming behavior, offer soothing objects).</p> <p>Responding consistently to child’s behaviors through actions, tone, and words.</p> <p>Setting appropriate and consistent limits.</p>
C3. Become more adept at expressing own feelings appropriately and recognizing others’ emotions.	<p>Recognize names for a few basic emotions when experienced by self or others (e.g., nods when asked “Are you sad?” or understands Eli is crying because someone took his doll.).</p> <p>Finds acceptable way to express anger such as saying, “I’m mad!”</p>	<p>Having books available that address feelings and naming feelings and intentions when interacting with child and others.</p> <p>Encouraging empathy for others (including pets) by modeling caring or responsive behaviors, and using language to explain actions and feelings.</p> <p>Using dolls, puppets, and books to describe or model ways to express feelings (e.g., puppet stamps foot instead of hitting when angry).</p>
C4. Demonstrate progress in expressing needs and opinions in situations without harming self or others.	<p>Ask for the food or toy desired rather than taking from another child.</p> <p>State a position with reasons (e.g., at the suggestion of going for a walk, shakes head and says, “— too tired.”)</p> <p>Begin to accept the consequences of own actions.</p>	<p>Acknowledging child’s use of words to let you know what she wants.</p> <p>Giving suggestions to child for solving problems (e.g., “If we take turns, everyone gets to play.”).</p> <p>Dramatizing or explaining how child’s behavior affects others.</p>

Social and Emotional Development Strand 3: Expression of Feelings and Self-Regulation

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
C5. Use toys and other objects purposefully and safely.	<p>Use props in pretend play that demonstrate an understanding of their intended purposes (e.g., using play dishes and foods to prepare a pretend lunch.).</p> <p>Use play materials in the intended way, such as building with blocks rather than throwing them, or keeping water in the water table.</p>	<p>Engaging with child in dramatic play, demonstrating the intended way to use toys or other materials.</p> <p>Modeling safe and socially appropriate ways to use equipment and materials.</p> <p>Reinforcing rules that promote safety and protect property and respect the rights of others to share or have turns using materials.</p>
C6. Recognize own behaviors that are off limits, but not be able to stop self in advance.	Say, “No, No” and shake head while doing action that is not permitted as an attempt to control own behavior.	Commenting on child's understanding that the act is not acceptable and redirect by saying, “You remembered that you're not supposed to throw food on the floor because you told yourself, ‘No.’ Next time tell yourself before you do that.”
C7. Offer to share, but only something that is plentiful, or give another a turn but only when finished.	Offer piece of cereal or toy to peer.	Commenting on child's willingness to share even though it requires little sacrifice.
C8. Follow simple rules and routines with guidance.	<p>Check with adults for rules or consequences, e.g., asks if it is ok to go outside now.</p> <p>Help adult with simple chores such as putting toys or objects in proper place.</p>	<p>Creating simple rules for daily routines using child's words and input.</p> <p>Giving child meaningful chores and making a chart of all the work accomplished.</p>

Social and Emotional Development Strand 3: Expression of Feelings and Self-Regulation

Indicators Children Are Learning To.....	Examples You May Observe the Child....	Strategies You Can Help/Support By.....
C9. Manage transitions.	<p>Separate from adult with growing ease.</p> <p>Respond positively to the signal for a change in activity.</p>	<p>Responding to individual children in ways that support a successful transition.</p> <p>Providing cues and adequate transition time, talking with child about upcoming changes to schedule or setting.</p>
C10. Use socially acceptable behavior when completing tasks or problem solving.	<p>Attempt to settle disputes or solve problems with another child through negotiation and compromise, addressing own rights as well as the other child's needs, with and without assistance (e.g., "I'll use the paste and then give it to you.")</p> <p>Give and take in interactions, such as during games or using materials, without being overly submissive or directive.</p>	<p>Supporting child's attempts to problem-solve and manage conflicts (e.g., by asking, "What should we do to solve this problem?" or, "What do you think would happen if you did that?" to help child evaluate solutions he suggests.)</p> <p>Giving child ample time to solve own problems before intervening.</p> <p>Reading stories or inventing puppet plays in which characters solve conflicts constructively.</p> <p>Being sensitive with child who may need additional assistance with negotiation (e.g., a child with language delay).</p>
C11. Name and talk about own emotions and can associate them with varying facial expressions.	<p>Use words to express feelings, such as, "I get angry when you push me."</p> <p>Express feelings, needs and opinions in difficult situations and conflicts without harming self, others, or property.</p>	<p>Helping child express feelings while playing with others or listening to stories.</p> <p>Naming specific emotions (e.g., sad, happy, angry, afraid, tired, worried, disappointed) that people experience.</p>
C12. Enjoy some rough-and-tumble with trusted friends.	<p>Play like he is fighting or hurting another child, but be able to manage own behavior so that no one gets hurt.</p>	<p>Allowing rough-and-tumble play, but observing for signs that it might be getting out of bounds.</p> <p>Setting some limits on when, where, how rough-and-tumble occurs and talking with children about difference between "play-fighting" and real hurtful behavior.</p>